AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1 to 5 (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) A ball joint comprising:

~~a~~ the ball joint defining an axis and including a housing, a ball stud having a ball head and a sealing bellows which lies against said housing and said ball stud in order to seal between said housing and said ball stud, said ball stud having a generally axially extending holding surface against which a sealing surface of said sealing bellows lies and a generally radially extending contact surface, said holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a generally radially extending shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows, said sealing surface defining a first axial dimension, said holding surface defining a second axial dimension between said generally radially extending shoulder and said generally radially extending contact surface, wherein said first axial dimension of said sealing surface of said sealing bellows is greater than said second axial dimension of said holding surface of said ball stud, ~~and wherein said holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows~~.

7. (Original) The ball joint of Claim 6 wherein said holding surface and said sealing surface are cylindrical.

8. (Original) The ball joint of Claim 6 wherein said sealing bellows is provided with a metal ring which urges said sealing surface against said holding surface.

9. (Previously Presented) The ball joint of Claim 6 further including a vehicle component mounted to said ball joint, wherein a contact surface of said vehicle component is provided so as to adjoin said holding surface on a side of said holding surface facing away from said housing.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously Presented) The ball joint of Claim 6 further including a vehicle component mounted to said ball joint, wherein said sealing bellows is dimensioned such that said sealing bellows cannot slip off from said holding surface when said ball joint is not mounted to said vehicle component.

12. (Currently Amended) A ball joint comprising:

~~a~~ the ball joint defining an axis and including a housing, a ball stud having a ball head and a sealing bellows which lies against said housing and said ball stud in order to seal between said housing and said ball stud, said ball stud having a generally axially extending cylindrical holding surface against which a cylindrical sealing surface of said sealing bellows lies and a generally radially extending contact surface, said holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a generally radially extending shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows, said sealing bellows provided with a metal ring which urges said sealing surface against said holding surface, said sealing surface defining a first axial dimension, said holding surface defining a second axial dimension between said generally radially extending shoulder and said generally radially extending contact surface, wherein said first axial dimension of said sealing surface of said sealing bellows is greater than said second axial dimension of said holding surface of said ball stud~~, and wherein said cylindrical holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows~~.

13. (Previously Presented) The ball joint of Claim 12 further including a vehicle component mounted to said ball joint, wherein a contact surface of said vehicle component is provided so as to adjoin said holding surface on a side of said holding surface facing away from said housing.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Previously Presented) The ball joint of Claim 12 further including a vehicle component mounted to said ball joint, wherein said sealing bellows is dimensioned such that said sealing bellows cannot slip off from said holding surface when said ball joint is not mounted to said vehicle component.

16. (Withdrawn) A method for producing a vehicle component and ball joint assembly comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a vehicle component:

(b) providing a ball joint including a housing, a ball stud and a sealing bellows which lies against the housing and the ball stud in order to seal between the housing and the ball stud, the ball stud having a holding surface against which a sealing surface of the sealing bellows lies and a shoulder, the sealing surface defining a first axial dimension when not being deformed, the holding surface defining a second axial dimension, wherein the first axial dimension of the sealing surface of the sealing bellows is greater than the second axial dimension of the holding surface of the ball stud;

(c) inserting the ball stud through the component; and

(d) securing the ball stud to the component using a fastener to thereby cause the vehicle component to lie against a contact surface of the ball stud and wherein the sealing surface of the sealing bellows is compressed in an axial direction between the shoulder and the vehicle component.

17. (Withdrawn) The method for producing a vehicle component and ball joint assembly of Claim 17 wherein in step (b) the holding surface and sealing surface are cylindrical.

18. (Withdrawn) The method for producing a vehicle component and ball joint assembly of Claim 17 wherein in step (b) the sealing bellows is provided with a metal ring which urges the sealing surface against the holding surface.

19. (Currently Amended) A ball joint and vehicle component assembly comprising:

a vehicle component; and

a ball joint having said vehicle component mounted thereto, said ball joint defining an axis and including a housing, a ball stud having a ball head and a sealing bellows which lies against said housing and said ball stud in order to seal between said housing and said ball stud, said ball stud having a generally axially extending ~~cylindrical~~ holding surface against which a ~~cylindrical~~ sealing surface of said sealing bellows lies and a generally radially extending contact surface, ~~said sealing bellows provided with a metal ring which urges said sealing surface against said holding surface,~~ said holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a generally radially extending shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows, said sealing surface defining a first axial dimension, said holding surface defining a second axial dimension between said generally radially extending shoulder and said generally radially extending contact surface, wherein said first axial dimension of said sealing surface of said sealing bellows is greater than said second axial dimension of said holding surface of said ball stud prior to mounting of said vehicle component to said ball joint. ~~and wherein said cylindrical holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows; and~~

~~a vehicle component mounted to said ball joint.~~

20. (Previously Presented) The ball joint and vehicle component assembly of Claim 19 wherein said holding surface and said sealing surface are cylindrical.

21. (Previously Presented) The ball joint and vehicle component assembly of Claim 19 wherein said sealing bellows is provided with a metal ring which urges said sealing surface against said holding surface.

22. (Previously Presented) The ball joint and vehicle component assembly of Claim 19 wherein a contact surface of said vehicle component is provided so as to adjoin said holding surface on a side of said holding surface facing away from said housing.

23. (Previously Presented) The ball joint and vehicle component assembly of Claim 19 wherein said sealing bellows is dimensioned such that said sealing bellows cannot slip off from said holding surface when said ball joint is not mounted to said vehicle component.

24. (New) The ball joint of Claim 6 wherein said generally radially extending contact surface and said generally radially extending abutment surface of said shoulder extend generally parallel to each other.

25. (New) The ball joint of Claim 12 wherein said generally radially extending contact surface and said generally radially extending abutment surface of said shoulder extend generally parallel to each other.

26. (New) The ball joint and vehicle component assembly of Claim 19 wherein said generally radially extending contact surface and said generally radially extending abutment surface of said shoulder extend generally parallel to each other.

27. (New) The ball joint and vehicle component assembly of Claim 19 wherein said sealing bellows is provided with a metal ring which urges said sealing surface against said holding surface.

28. (New) The ball joint and vehicle component assembly of Claim 19 wherein when said vehicle component is mounted to said ball joint and moved toward said ball head such that said vehicle component enages said generally radially extending contact surface of said ball stud, said vehicle component engages an outer end of said sealing bellows to thereby compress said sealing bellows on said holding surface between said vehicle component and said generally radially extending shoulder and to firmly press said sealing surface against said holding surface such that said first axial dimension of said sealing surface is reduced to generally equal said second axial dimension of said cylindrical holding surface.